

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 STATE 019578
ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-02 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01
ACDA-12 HA-05 /084 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/CEN:EHICKS/LC
APPROVED BY ARA:SASHELTON
-----000118 251353Z /47

R 250114Z JAN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

UNCLAS STATE 019578

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, MMOL, SHUM, ES, UK

SUBJECT: BRITAIN CANCELS ARMS SALES TO EL SALVADOR

1. ARTICLE BY PATRICK KEATLEY IN JANUARY 20 "THE GUARDIAN"
REPORTS BRITISH CANCELLATION OF SALES OF ARMoured CARS TO
EL SALVADOR. YOU WILL NOTE SOME FACTUAL INACCURACIES AS
WELL AS CONFUSION BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND FORMER SALVADORAN
GOVERNMENTS.

BEGIN TEXT:

MR. CALLAGHAN AND HIS SENIOR CABINET COLLEAGUES HAVE BOWED
TO PUBLIC PRESSURE AND CANCELLED A DECISION TO SUPPLY 15
BRITISH ARMY ARMoured CARS TO THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP
OF PRESIDENT CARLOS ROMERO IN EL SALVADOR.
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 019578

THE FREIGHTER MV SUSANNE VINNEN, NOW LOADING AT SHEERNESS,
WAS TO HAVE SAILED ON FEBRUARY 2 WITH A CONSIGNMENT OF
RECONDITIONED VEHICLES VALUED AT POUNDS 900,000.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, MR. DAVID
OWEN, HAVE BEEN BOMBARDED BY MESSAGES AND TELEPHONE CALLS,

INCLUDING A LETTER FROM CARDINAL HUME OF WESTMINSTER, URGING THEM TO RECONSIDER AN EARLIER DECISION TO ALLOW GENERAL ROMERO TO AUGMENT HIS CONSIDERABLE FLEET OF MILITARY VEHICLES.

SOURCES AT WESTMINSTER LAST NIGHT SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS PRESSURE FROM BACKBENCH LABOUR MP'S THAT PROVED DECISIVE. MR. CALLAGHAN WAS PERSUADED THAT HE WAS TAKING UNNECESSARY RISKS IN ANTAGONIZING THEM. THE SALE OF THE 12 SALADINS AND 3 FERRETS WAS NOT POLITICALLY SENSITIVE IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE THEY WERE ARMY SURPLUS.

THE FO STATEMENT SAID: QUOTE: THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT THE CONTRACT FOR THE SALE OF ARMoured VEHICLES TO EL SALVADOR SHOULD BE CANCELLED. THIS DECISION WAS TAKEN BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA. END QUOTE.

THE SITUATION REFERRED TO INVOLVES THE APPALLING RECORD OF REPRESSION OF THE CHURCH AND OF FARM WORKERS IN THE REPUBLIC AND GENERAL ROMERO'S RECENT DECISION TO STRENGTHEN HIS SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY REGIME IN GUATEMALA IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO PARTITION THE BRITISH COLONY OF BELIZE.

FOR THE PAST FORTNIGHT, IN THE FACE OF MOUNTING ANGER AT WESTMINSTER, EMBARRASSED OFFICIALS IN WHITEHALL HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 019578

HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO DEFEND THE ARMoured CARS DEAL BY SAYING THAT PRESIDENT ROMERO HAD GIVEN SOLEMN UNDERTAKINGS NOT TO LEND THE MILITARY VEHICLES TO GUATEMALA.

SOME OF THE DECISIVE PRESSURE TO CANCEL MAY HAVE COME DISCRETELY FROM WASHINGTON. PRESIDENT CARTER RECENTLY ANNOUNCED, AFTER GETTING REPORTS FROM MR. VANCE AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THAT AMERICA WILL PERMIT NO FURTHER ARMS SALES OR MILITARY TRAINING FOR THE ROMERO REGIME.

THE REGIME HAD BRANDED THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR "A COMMUNIST" AFTER HE HAD PROTESTED AT THE ARREST AND DISAPPEARANCE OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN THE STATE OF SIEGE WHICH BEGAN IN JUNE. MANY JESUIT PRIESTS HAD SIDED WITH THE FAMILIES AFFECTED AND WERE PROMPTLY SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT AS "SUBVERSIVES."

GENERAL ROMERO HAS USED HIS EXISTING ARMoured CARS - WHICH ARE IN EFFECT TANKS ON WHEELS - TO PUT DOWN DEMONSTRATIONS LAST FEBRUARY AND AGAIN IN JUNE. THE MURDER OF THE CHANCELLOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY WAS USED AS A PRETEXT FOR FRESH WAVES OF REPRESSION. END TEXT. VANCE

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS, PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE019578
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EHICKS/LC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780037-0309
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780123/aaaaatnc.tel
Line Count: 116
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: eac6a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 feb 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3715822
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITAIN CANCELS ARMS SALES TO EL SALVADOR
TAGS: SOPN, MMOL, SHUM, ES, UK
To: SAN SALVADOR
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/eac6a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014